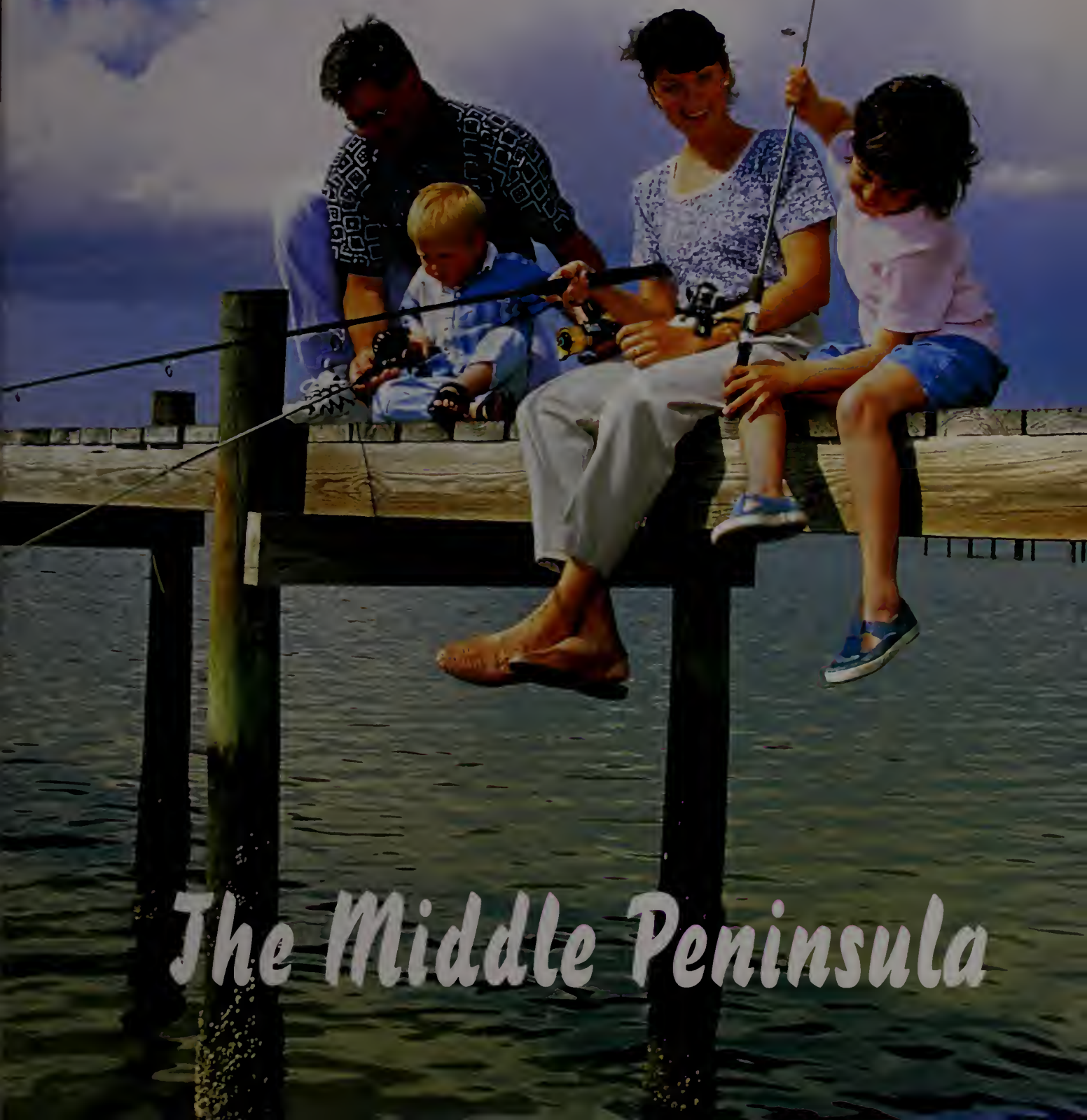


VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

FEBRUARY 1998

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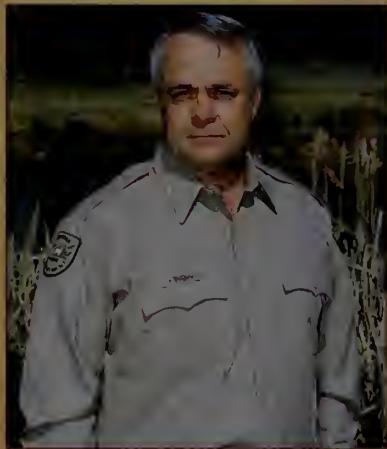


The Middle Peninsula



Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr



Here it is February again and almost like every February, it's cold. Not just cold, but a dark depressing cold with really nothing to do but stare out the window and wish for spring. It's this time of year that folks who love being in the outdoors suffer the most with what is commonly called cabin fever. There are a few but costly cures for cabin fever, most requiring lengthy plane rides to warmer places where tropical breezes blow and the word *snow* is not part of the common language.

With this in mind the staff of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine a few years back came up with a quick fix solution for cabin fever. It was first decided that it would have to be something that would hold a person over until the arrival of spring. It also had to be something that was inexpensive and could be picked up at a moments notice to suppress wintery

thoughts that some how always brought on a case of this terrible fever. So was born the February photo issue of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine.

It is my pleasure to once again warm your hearts and revitalize your souls with this year's photo issue, "Virginia's Middle Peninsula." For many of you this area is communally known as the "Rivah" or the land between two rivers, the Rappahannock to the north, and the York River to the south. It's an area filled with fascinating people, places and opportunities. Along with the help of writer Sally Mills, who has called the Middle Peninsula home for many years, and a host of talented photographers, it is our hope that we can offer you a small slice of this wonderful part of the Commonwealth.

As you look and read through this issue I think you will be surprised to discover all the different possibilities that this area has to offer. With the influence of the Chesapeake Bay and large tracks of farm land, the Middle Peninsula has remained a place with great natural diversity. It's an area rich in history and a place tailored toward people who like to hunt, fish and who simply enjoy being in the outdoors.

With the cooperation of many people, groups and government agencies, Virginia's Middle Peninsula will remain an oasis for folks who are looking for a place to get away from it all. We here at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries are proud of all the hard work and time that we have invested to make this area what it is today. As you sit back and look over this issue, it is our hope that you realize that together we can help manage this natural resource for our children and children to come.

Whether it's tomorrow, or ten years from now, our goal here at DGIF will always be to work toward protecting Virginia's wildlife and to have places for people to go and enjoy the outdoors. Places where one can jump a covey of quail, call in a wary gobbler, or just sit back shuck a few oysters, as the warm glow of a setting sun glistens off the rippling waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

William L. Woodfin, Jr.

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VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Cover by Ed Dwight Doyle

Features

4 The Middle Peninsula: Virginia's Pearl for Sally Mill

Join us as we take a pictorial journey and explore the land between two rivers, the Rappahannock River in the north and the York River in the south. For those who wish to experience what we're just showing, it then and only holds a delight.

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

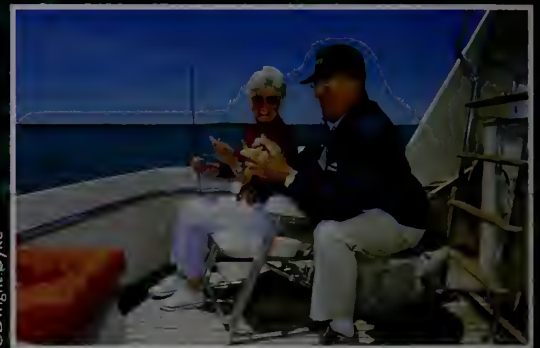
VOLUME 9

NUMBER 1

The Middle Peninsula *Virginia's*



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With over 1,100 miles of tidal shoreline, the Middle Peninsula always had a rich tradition of commercial fishing, hunting and recreational fishing.

Pearl

©Dwight Dyke



By Sally Mills

*N*estled snugly between the Rappahannock River to the north and the York River to the south rests Virginia's Middle Peninsula, a place known for its meandering rivers and marshes rather than any commercial hubs. It is a place deeply rooted in the traditions of hunting, trapping, and fishing. And today's Middle Peninsula proudly carries on those traditions, originated by the area's first known inhabitants: the Pamunkey, Mattaponi, and Rappahannock Indians.

It is their stories at the core of some long-held secrets about the beauty and mysteries of the physical landscape. The secrets they have kept are closely guarded by modern-day hunters and fishermen alike. But don't be surprised to have to pry it out of them. The secrets have allowed the Middle Peninsula to remain much as it was almost a century ago, before the car and asphalt that accompanied it opened the peninsula to travelers and newcomers.





These clams are one of the bounties found in the waters along the Middle Peninsula.

©Dwight Dyke



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Folks generally think of six counties when describing the area: in the uplands, Essex, King and Queen, and King William, and in the lower reaches, Middlesex, Mathews, and Gloucester flanking Chesapeake Bay. The land is flat with a few predictable ridges formed after an intruding bay washed over the coastal plain, then receded. Coarse sands and shell deposits still abound, while finely grained alluvial clays and rich earth comprise the lowland soils near the Chesapeake. That bay forever shapes life here—the weather, the types of animals and plants that thrive, the livelihood of commercial fishermen, and the rhythmic tide that flushes the large tributaries twice daily.

February 1998

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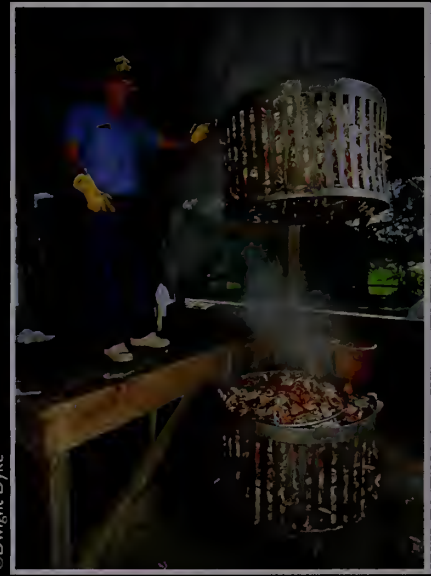
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Long hours and hard work have always been reflected in the life of a waterman.

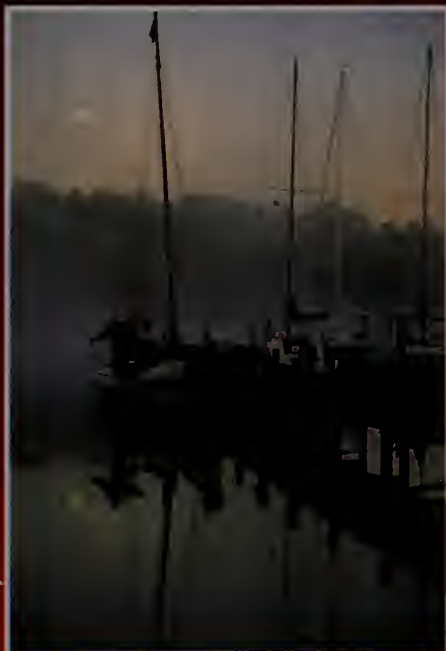
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"This fishing industry is of major economic importance to the residents of the lower Middle Peninsula. Watermen, seafood processors, boat yards, and trucking companies derive direct monetary benefit from a healthy productive bay."

***Buddy Bland
County Supervisor, Gloucester***

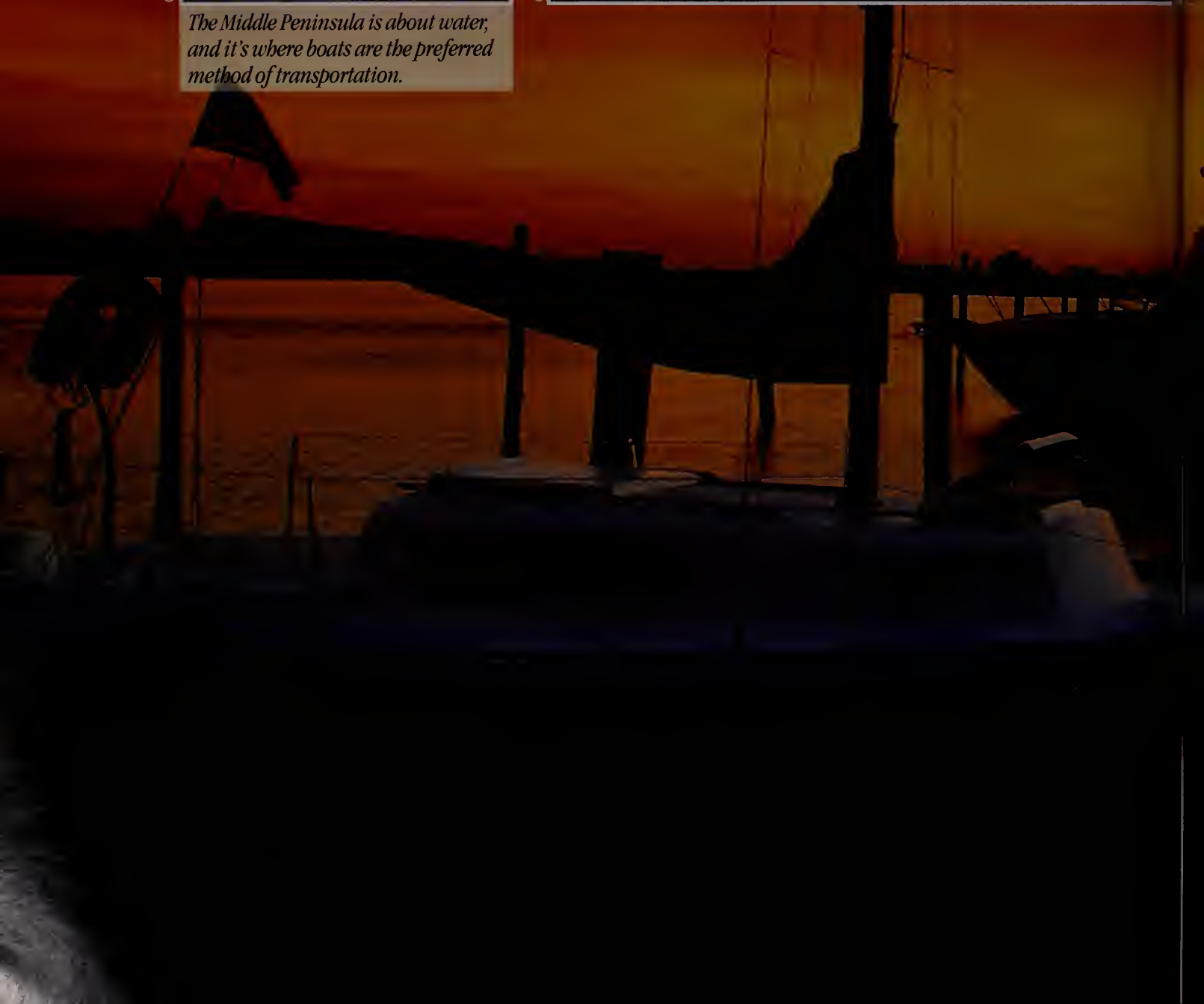


©Starke Jett

The Middle Peninsula is about water, and it's where boats are the preferred method of transportation.



©Dwight Dyke



"The lower Middle Peninsula is an attractive area for recreational boaters and fishermen. Services that support these activities contribute significantly to the economic health of the area. Water related activities provide a variety of employment opportunities, skilled and unskilled, for the residents of the lower Middle Peninsula."

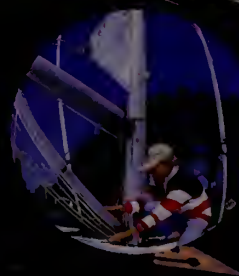
*Buddy Bland
County Supervisor
Gloucester*

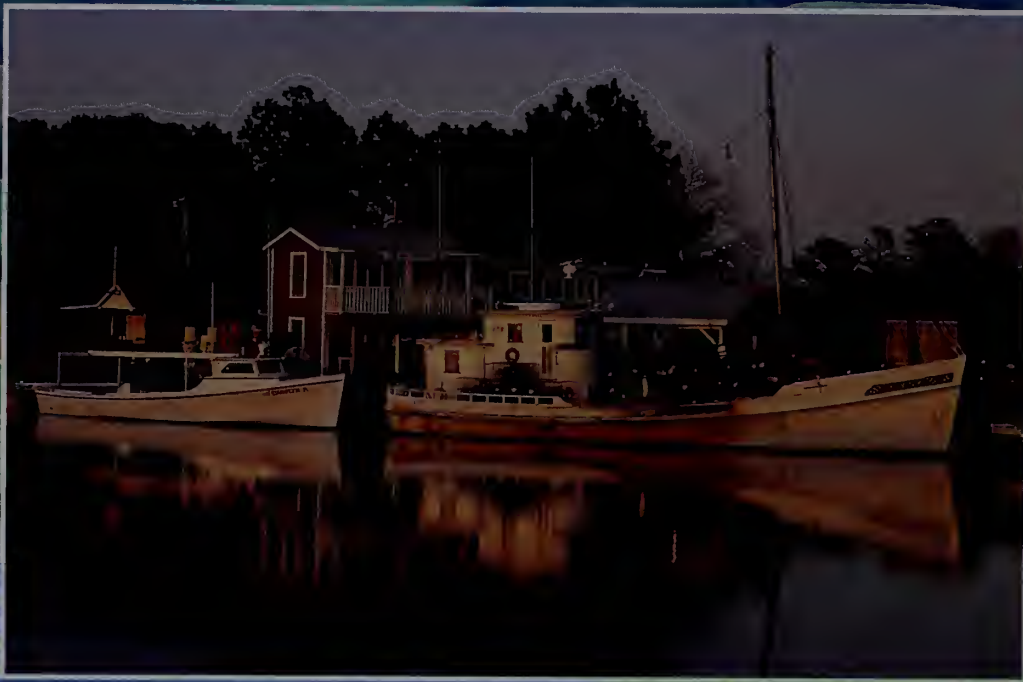


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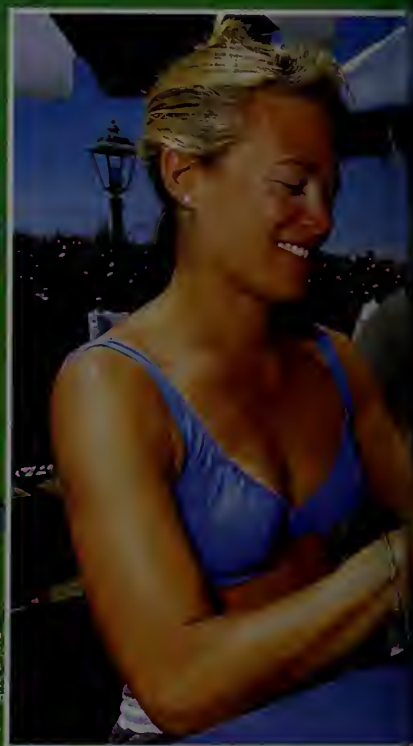


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At the eastern end of the peninsula, where the thousands of small creeks have given way to the large rivers emptying into the bay, the edges are quite different of course. Here, salt-water rinses ribbons of underwater and marsh grasses, beaches and sand dunes. Along more developed stretches like Mobjack Bay and Deltaville, you'll find a colorful display of boathouses, marinas, crabhouses, and fishing piers. The inlets and bays of Deltaville, Gwynn's Island, and New Point-Comfort are the watermen's domain. Here, weathered hands reap the bay's treasures for dining rooms up and down the Eastern seaboard.





©Dwight Dike

Whether it's milling around the waterfront, working with boats or just sitting down and enjoying a plate of steamed crabs the Middle Peninsula is full of simple pleasures.



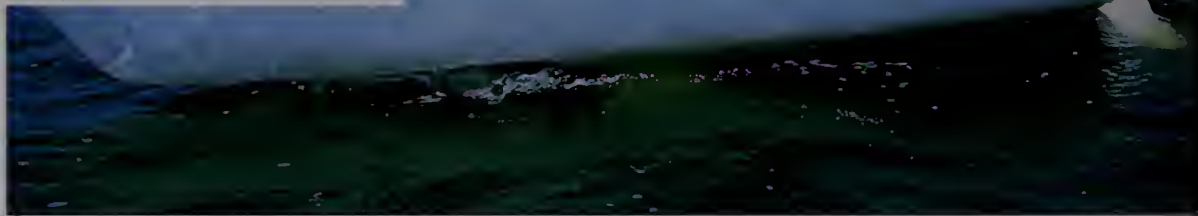
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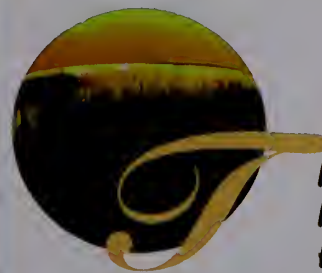




Hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, sailing and sightseeing are just a few of the many outdoor opportunities that are bringing visitors from near and far.



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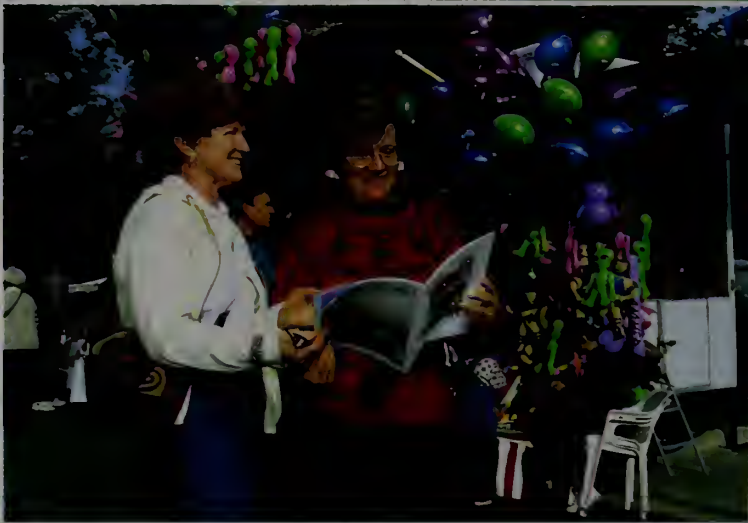
he eastern counties have combined their energies with

those on the Northern Neck to organize a tourism effort to tout the many virtues of the Chesapeake Bay. Marketing under the name, "Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Region," they plan to capitalize on the tremendous recreational opportunities here: everything from wind-surfing and charter boat fishing to sailing lessons to camping to guided canoe trips. There are walking tours of historic areas and a lengthy list of landmarks worth traveling to, including several Colonial-era churches: Ware Episcopal and Abingdon Episcopal churches in Gloucester, Christ Church in Middlesex, and St. John's Episcopal Church in King William.

The generally flat terrain of the lower reaches makes Mathews County an ideal spot to tote your bicycle. For the second time this past summer, thousands of people descended on the area to ride in a new cycling event sponsored by Mathews County in cooperation with Bike Virginia. A series of newly-designated bike trails and "Market Days," held at the Mathews courthouse in early September, combine for a lovely way to while away a fall afternoon.



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The culture and diversity of the region has given rise to numerous seasonal festivals that celebrate the area's bounty.



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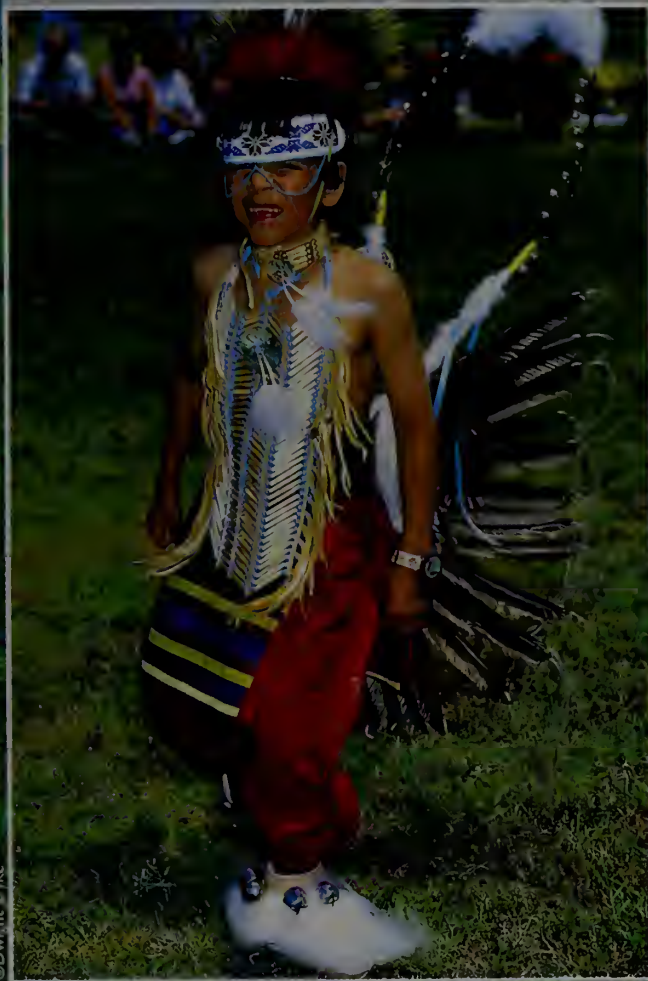


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"The pow-wow is held on Memorial Day weekend each spring. There are dancers, drumming, arts and crafts, and plenty of food. The pottery and beadwork is based on traditions dating back to the mid-1600s."

Edmond Adams, Jr.
Chief, Upper Mattaponi Indians
pictured left

Above right: Webster Custalow, Chief, Mattaponi Indians



©Dwight Dyke



The Middle Peninsula is also home to many

well-known seasonal festivals, where you can sample everything from oysters and crabs to locally grown produce. The Urbanna Oyster Festival is perhaps the best known and usually runs the first weekend in November each year. Also sharing the seafood spotlight is the West Point Crab Carnival, held in early October. Gloucester's Daffodil Festival in April is a treat for the eyes, when endless gardens and public walkways spring to life in varying shades of yellow.

If your visits make you curious to know more about the natural and cultural resources here, a number of organizations can help. The Middle Peninsula Travel Council maintains a list of lodging places, attractions, marina and campground facilities, and historic sites open to the public. The Mattaponi and Pamunkey Indian Reservations house gift shops and museums, with artifacts dating back to the Paleo-Indian era. Several river groups offer educational programs on the area's unique and spectacular resources.



*s far upriver as
Aylett on the Mat-
taponi and Route*

360 on the Pamunkey, the tide makes you ever mindful of the complexity of living systems in and along the river corridors. To the recreational user, timing is everything. During late summer, a low tide on the Dragon in the upper reaches of the Piankatank River, for instance, can prevent you from paddling many of its small creeks. In the tiny town of Walkerton on the Mattaponi River, where the tide differs nearly four feet between low and high, an ebbing condition creates daunting challenges to your docking options after a long day on the water.

Water has a reputation for slowing things down around here, and plenty of people think that's just fine. A handful of bridges make the connection to the outside world, but distances are lengthy in between. In fact, a paddler without a motorized boat will have only select options for a short trip between public landings or bridges. With few exceptions, you'll need to set aside a full day for a canoe trip.



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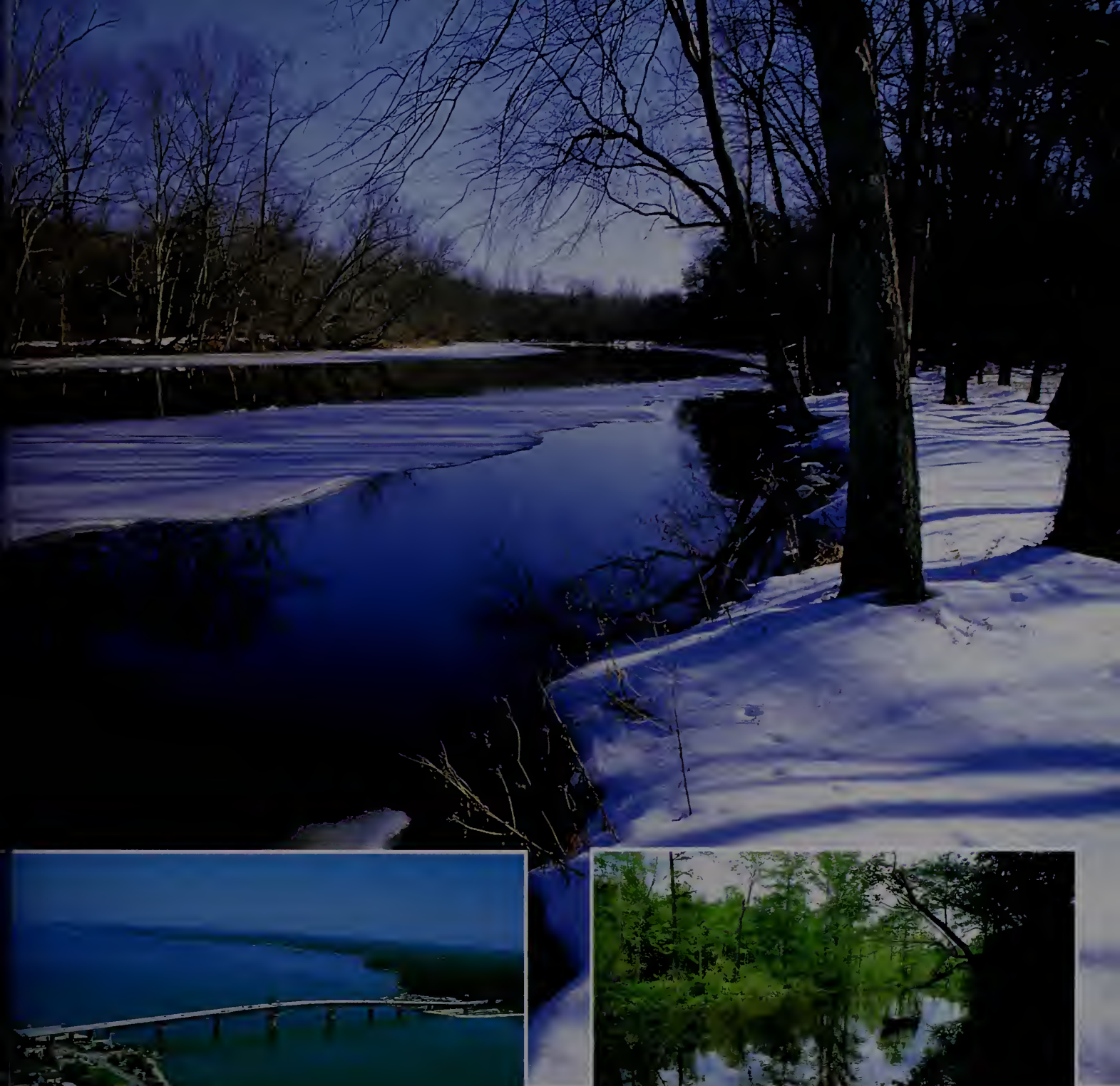
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"With every change of temperature and tide, there's always something to keep me on the river...eelng, duck hunting, and trapping in the colder months and fishing nets in the early spring."

*Skip Beattie,
Little Plymouth*



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Change has come slowly to the Middle Peninsula, but with the dedication of the new Coleman Bridge, the pace of development is increasing, bringing growth and new jobs.



The Mattaponi River, boasts a diversity of birds and animals which is only matched by the number of people who come to enjoy the magnificent bird watching, hunting, and fishing.



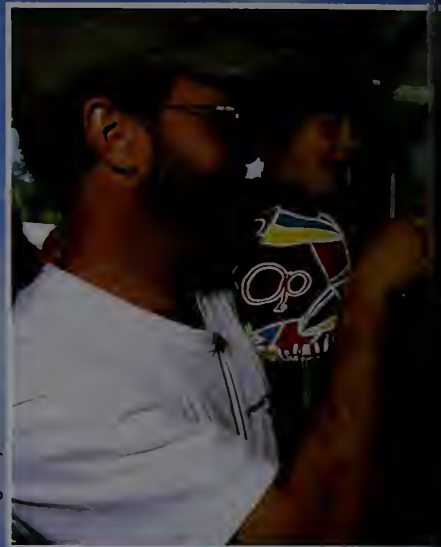
Is this bounty of rivers and thickly vegetated edges that draw a spectacular array of birds, small and large game, and waterfowl. From the lapping waters of the bay to the westernmost creeks in King and Queen County, a rich array of salt and freshwater marshes, winding wetlands, lowland hardwoods, and mixed deciduous forests offer a cornucopia of food choices and plentiful nursery grounds. Besides the well-known seasonal and year-round residents—Canada geese, black ducks, turkeys, deer, hawks, herons, and quail—a close observer will uncover plenty of unusual fauna and flora. The least tern, the American bald eagle, and rare plants like the sensitive joint-vetch and feather foil are still found in more undisturbed corners of the landscape.



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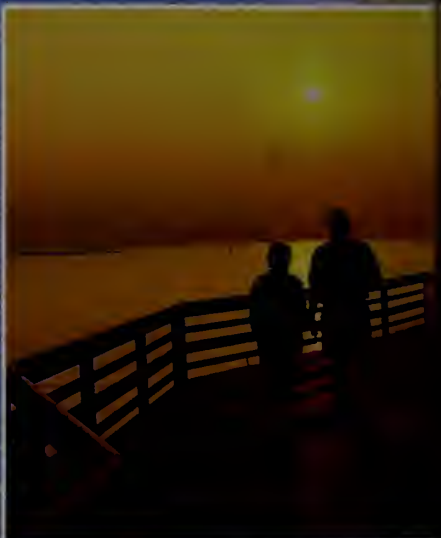
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New partnerships between the state and private groups are creating opportunities for the public to enjoy a host of outdoors adventures.



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The Middle Peninsula has drawn the attention of a handful of public and private researchers. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' (VDGIF) own fish hatchery in Stevensville has become a premier facility for studying, raising, and stocking several species of migratory fish, including striped bass and American shad. VDGIF and The Natural Heritage Program continue to explore, identify, and inventory the rare and endangered animal and plant species found throughout the region. The discovery of the endangered northeastern beach tiger beetle along the coast in Mathews County is just one beneficiary of a cooperative research effort, resulting in the state's acquisition of land for a preserve. The Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve now protects one of the last remaining homes of the beetle, which was once plentiful along the northeast coast. And the Virginia Institute of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary is located in Gloucester Point, where it conducts its marine programs on the banks of the York River. The school's research greatly contributes to our understanding of all sorts of marine and estuarine life, and forms the underpinnings of many Chesapeake Bay policy initiatives.



**he Mattaponi
and Pamunkey
Rivers Associa-**

tion runs educational trips and teacher training aboard its classic wooden cruiser, the "Star-ship," pictured top right. Their goal is simple: Put teachers directly on the water, where the outdoor classroom provides the best opportunity for the study of riverine ecology. And for those interested in exploring representative upland communities, Zoar State Forest in King William County offers visitors the chance to hike through magnificent wetlands, mixed hardwoods, and fields and farmlands, all displaying environmentally sensitive management practices.



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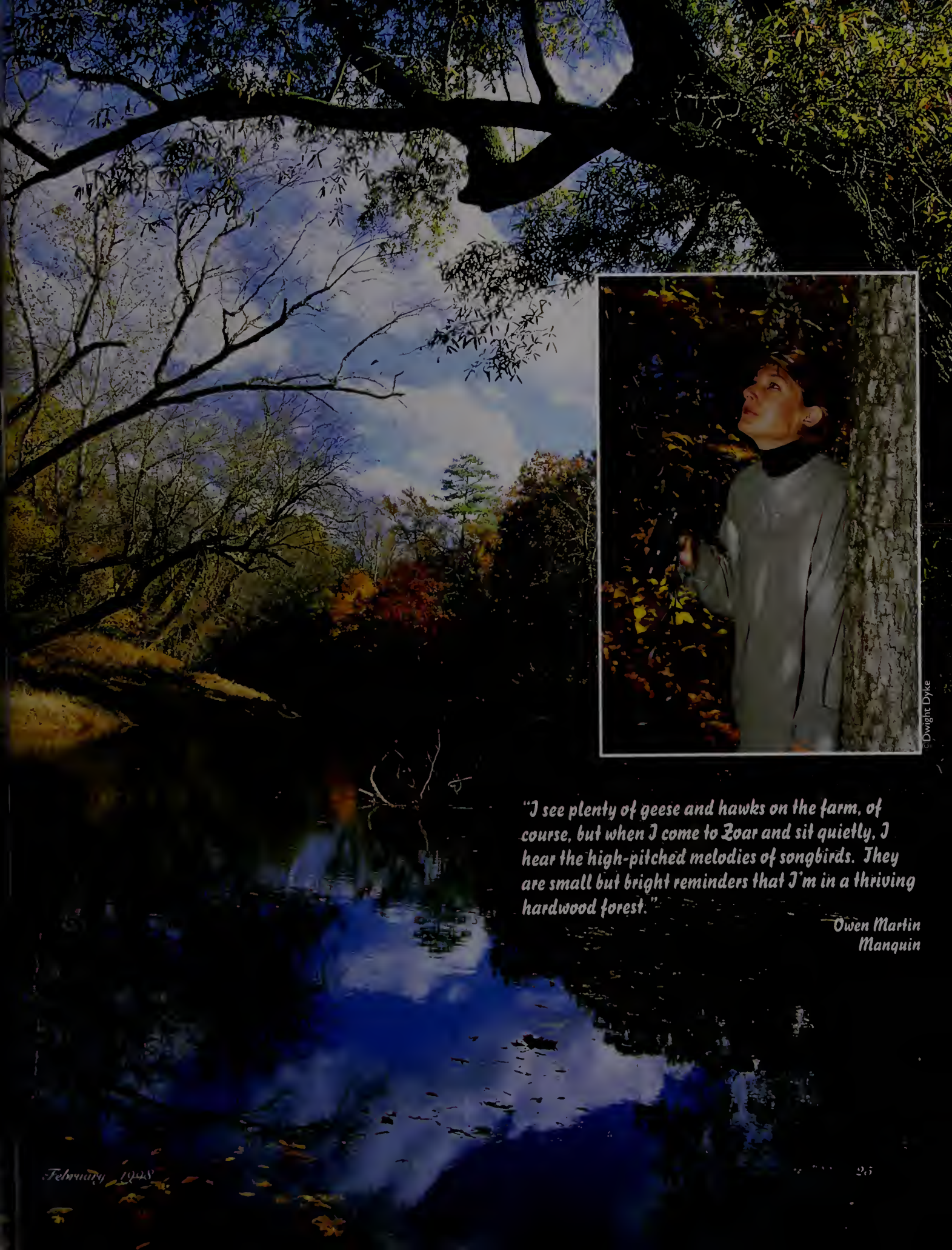


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"I see plenty of geese and hawks on the farm, of course, but when I come to Zoar and sit quietly, I hear the high-pitched melodies of songbirds. They are small but bright reminders that I'm in a thriving hardwood forest."

*Owen Martin
Manquin*



©Dwight Dyke

"The Town of West Point is committed to utilize the natural resources here to promote positive growth and be environmentally friendly. These rivers and estuaries play a big part in the aesthetics of West Point and we want to preserve them as much as we can."

*Lance Metzler
Town Manager, West Point*

Virginia Wildlife



The Middle Peninsula has it all: plenty of wide open

spaces, deep forests, abundant surface water, a rich cultural heritage, and small communities where folks still look out for each other. While it is true that pockets of the landscape—mostly along the fringes—are developing rapidly, large expanses remain unsettled and, therefore, welcoming to a magnificent blend of wildlife. Those who hunt the forests and fields, fish the waters, or just observe its understated beauty from a canoe or a woodland trail hope it will forever stay that way.



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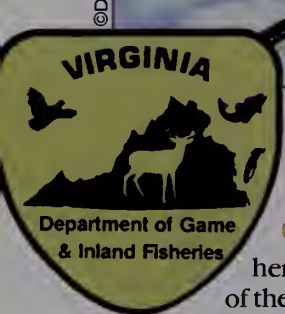
Traditions like sailing, family worship, and farming fields of snowy white cotton, all add to the tapestry of life throughout the Middle Peninsula.

Dwight Dyke

Managing Toward a Common Goal



©Dwight Dyke



Ask anyone around here who's the guardian of the woods and waterways and they will likely respond, "The Game Department." And ask them who keeps up with hunting and fishing licenses, boat registrations, and wildlife management, and they'll know that answer too, "The Game Department." Perhaps in no other region of the state is the Department more visible than here; in the Middle Peninsula.

VDGIF, or "the Game Department" as it is commonly called in rural Virginia, is the agency responsible for wildlife and fisheries management in Virginia. As such, its programs cut a wide swath across the landscape. The Department is actively engaged in wildlife research, population monitoring, setting hunting and fishing regulations, and enforcing those regulations. VDGIF also watches over the inland waterways of the state. In the Middle Peninsula, this means balancing the needs of a variety of "users" and ensuring the safety of a growing number of recreationists who find the

natural beauty and outdoor opportunities along some 1,100 miles of tidal water unparalleled.

For the most part, the Middle Peninsula is a region slight in people and robust in forests, fields, and clean water. That makes it a magnet for wildlife, especially as a refuge for nesting and raising young. And like much of Virginia's coastal plain, the Middle Peninsula is situated in the midst of the Atlantic Flyway, one of four major bird migration routes roughly stretching from Canada to South America. It's hardly surprising, then, that the Department actively surveys here for



much "edge habitat" here and across the state. These edges—hedgerows, briars, ditches, and fields of native bunchgrasses—make good quail homes, allowing the ground-dwelling birds to scratch for food and raise their young out of sight of predators flying overhead. The Department works with private landowners, mostly in King William and King and Queen counties, to improve quail habitat and reverse a long-term trend in declining populations. Technical assistance is provided in many forms. Converting patches of fine fescue grasses to native grasses and establishing field borders (by taking land out of agricultural production) are just two practices that reap immediate

benefits for quail, according to biologist Phil West of the Department's Williamsburg office.

Other biologists are camped out in the marshes and wetlands, so plentiful throughout the peninsula. They are busy tracking wood ducks, black ducks, geese, and most recently, tundra swans. The Department uses annual surveys to monitor population trends and make management decisions. After a precipitous decline in their numbers, migrant Canada geese have been off limits to hunters for three years. Gary Costanzo, who heads up the waterfowl program here, says they are starting to show promise of rebounding.

The outlook for other waterfowl is



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a number of migratory birds and waterfowl, in addition to large and small game and fish.

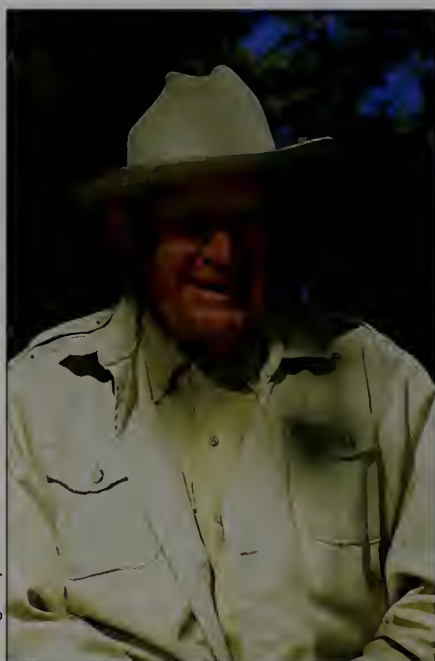
The peninsula has been the recipient of extensive wildlife management programs over the years aimed at restoring healthy populations of a host of species. Turkeys, white-tailed deer, and squirrels are just a few success stories mentioned by local hunters. Other species, bobwhite quail for example, are the interest of current studies.

A trend toward larger agricultural parcels and a focus on bottom-line profits has resulted in the removal of



©Dwight Dyke

Whether you're a game warden or a biologist, working with the public to help insure healthy populations of all of Virginia's wildlife and fish species is a full-time job.



"The Game Dept. has done a great job in bringing back wild turkeys and deer. The rabbit population has come back strong in some areas, and we have plenty of squirrels."

***Latane Trice
Walkerton***

unknown. More information is needed about wood ducks, for instance, and the Department needs landowners willing to help band, observe, and monitor ducks along with other migratory birds. A banding program to monitor tundra swans (which spend the winter months in area marshes) has recently been initiated.

The waters of the Middle Peninsula are healthy and teem with a wide range of native and migratory fish. From the water's depths, the Department conducts research of a different stripe. One such research effort, closely scrutinized these days, is the program on American shad, an anadromous species that migrates up several tidal rivers, including the Pamunkey. Unlike other rivers, the Pamunkey is free of dams and serious impediments; shad are therefore able to move into the freshwater reaches each spring to spawn.

Pre-spawning females are taken each year for their eggs, or roe, through a cooperative effort run by

Department biologists. The eggs are transported to the fish hatchery in Stevensville, where they are placed in large tanks, fertilized, and grow into young shad, called fry. Their ultimate destination is the James River, from there they will go out to sea and grow to maturity, returning to replenish the river.

The restocking program is just one strand of a finely woven plan to restore healthy fish populations to the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. In the process, each fish is tagged to allow scientists to later verify where it was reared, where it was released, and its year class (or age). By coordinating tagging procedures with other water-



Above: The Middle Peninsula has been playing a major role in the restoration of many of Virginia's anadromous fish like striped bass and shad. Top: Wildlife biologists are closely monitoring populations of resident Canada geese through an aggressive banding program. They are hoping to find whether or not they are making an impact on wild migrating Canada geese.

sheds of the state and with other states, we hope to learn more about fish migration as well as measure the success of restocking efforts. The highly publicized striped bass program is currently in the evaluation phase. According to program manager Dean Fowler, stripers have made a dramatic recovery in the Chesapeake Bay. Their

County, says, "We've got unique law enforcement here: a large amount of wildlife enforcement, plus boating and fishing in both fresh and salt water to do. We have it all here!" Sgt. Hank Garner of King William agrees, "This is one of the Department's most diverse regions. We cover upland game and the extent of the tidal wa-

fastest growing segment of the boating industry. Larry Hart, director of boating and facilities, estimated that boats such as personal watercraft currently comprise about six percent of total boat registrations but close to 36 percent of boating accidents. Game Warden Hank Garner estimated that as much as 75 percent of the acci-



©Dwight Dyke

numbers have reached and possibly surpassed historic highs.

At the King and Queen Hatchery in Stevensville, other species like channel catfish, bluegill, and walleye are raised for stocking. Hatchery manager Chris Dahlem hopes that the new funding will allow the modernization of the facility to allow the flexibility necessary to raise different species. According to Chris, fish culture is a field that's changing rapidly, and there's plenty of new technology to explore.

On the flip side of research and habitat improvement are the composite of "harvest" regulations intended to ensure the long term health of a given species, and it is up to the state to determine and implement specific regulations defining seasons and limits. A big part of the Department's mission is enforcing those regulations statewide.

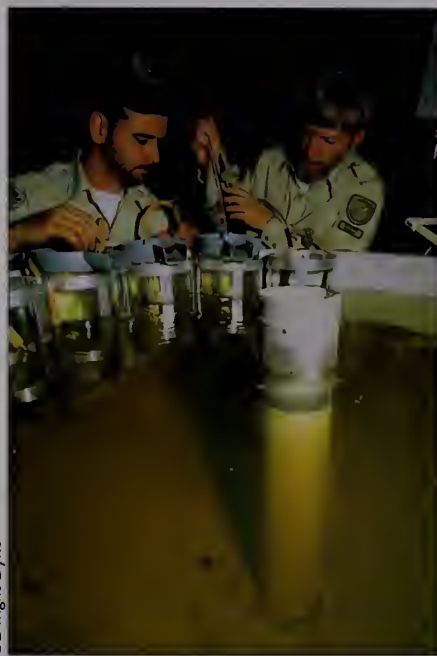
In the Middle Peninsula, this is no small task. The landscape here presents sweeping challenges as any game warden will be quick to point out. Ben Lewis, who covers Essex

ters all the way to the Chesapeake Bay."

Law enforcement on the land takes many forms and, as with any sport, there are going to be those who don't play by the rules. Catching wildlife violators in the act is a monumental task that requires manpower, time, and the help of law-abiding people who report such activities. As any game warden will confess it's certainly not a nine to five job.

Law enforcement on the water is a growing piece of the management mosaic. The sheer amount of surface water and proximity to the bay makes for plenty of boat traffic and misunderstandings between folks pursuing different recreational interests. Conflicts between a growing number of retirees who've built their dream cottages along the river's edge or the bayfront and a rise in recreational boaters is just one example.

One of the most contentious problems is the increase in accidents associated with personal watercraft, the



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Each spring spawning American shad are collected from the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers where their eggs are then taken to the Stevensville hatchery in King and Queen County. The eggs are then hatched and returned to some of Virginia's tidal rivers.

dents he investigated last summer were related to personal watercraft. Whatever the exact number, the sentiment that this is a problem that needs a solution is apparent.

Other trends present here? There's been a gradual shift from commercial to recreational fishing in the large rivers and Chesapeake Bay. That presents challenges to provide additional public access. The Department is working to provide better access and ensure boater safety in a number of ways. It has upgraded several public landings by installing fishing piers, providing handicap access, and improving parking. The Department actively patrols the inland waters, looking out for boaters who are operating

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"The Pamunkey tribe has been hatching shad eggs and returning them back to the rivers since 1918. Last year, we hatched 6 million eggs. We are tripling the size of our hatchery this year and hope to hatch 10 million eggs this coming spring."

**Warren Cook
Asst. Chief, Pamunkey Indians
West Point**

their boats in an unsafe manner. Check points are used to verify licenses and safety equipment on board, and to investigate any suspected BUIs (boating under the influence). In response to the increase in boating activity across Virginia, VDGIF recently completed a safety study and presented it to the General Assembly in January.

"Obviously, there's a limited amount of water but more and more people are placing demands on it," states Larry Hart.

"Resource sharing must occur," he added. Everyone needs to practice the three C's—courtesy, consideration, and common sense.

How does the Department keep up with its growing customer base? One way it stretches its people resources is by cooperating with other state and federal agencies. On the larger rivers like the Rappahannock and the York, patrolling boats often rub bows with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). VMRC handles the saltwater or marine fishing and boating crowd, but responsi-

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VDGIF boat ramps, top: on Rappahannock River at Wake; middle: Melrose Landing, Mattaponi River; bottom: on Mattaponi River at West Point.

bilities often overlap. It's not unusual for a VDGIF boat to pursue a vessel out into the bay for a few miles, for instance, or for a VMRC captain to go after a boat upriver.

And more and more, the Department calls upon individual citizens and private groups to help fulfill its mission. The American shad restoration effort is a prime example, pulling together the expertise of native Indian tribes, commercial fishermen, and the national fish hatchery at Harrison Lake toward a common goal.

The Department has not strayed from its mandate of serving the outdoor public and maintaining a plentiful supply of wildlife since its inception in 1916. And it has done so without the aid of general state tax revenues. Considering the number of paths it has branched into while striv-

ing to balance the needs of many, that says alot. As long-time sportsman, auctioneer, and farmer Latane Trice put it to me, "The Game Department is different from any other department. They operate at no cost to the taxpayer. In my opinion, they've always been a most respected department."

Speaking as someone who lives in the middle of spectacular hunting territory, who usually awakes this time of year to the sounds of migrating geese, and who is fortunate to be living on the banks of the Mattaponi River, I witness first-hand the magnitude of the Department's mission. Like my neighbor, Mr. Trice, I would agree. □



Dwight Dyke (left) with author Sally Mills in Walkerton on the banks of the Mattaponi River.

Dwight Dyke is a nationally acclaimed outdoor photographer whose work appears regularly in calendars and magazines throughout the country.

A Richmond native, Dwight attended Virginia Commonwealth University and the Univer-

sity of Cincinnati. His work includes scenic and nature photography from the U.S., Canada, Europe and the Caribbean. Dwight works primarily with 4 X 5 field cameras, but also uses medium format and 35mm cameras. Dwight spent the better part of a year photographing Virginia's Middle Peninsula for this special issue.

Sally Mills is a resident of the Middle Peninsula, where she and her husband have worked to build a grassroots coalition to protect the Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers.

Sally who has a Masters degree in professional writing also operates a desktop publishing company and has written and designed numerous publications for conservation and natural resource agencies.

She has recently completed a series of regional guides which are intended to promote environmentally friendly living in the home landscape, for residents of Virginia's spectacu-

lar coastal regions. These guides or almanacs include Virginia's Middle Peninsula, Eastern Shore and Northern Neck. They are designed to be embraced for their "user friendly" information and beautiful cover maps and information.

If you would like more information on Virginia's Middle Peninsula you can call:

Middle Peninsula Travel Council
1-800-292-9193,
then enter the PIN code, 5704

Mattaponi & Pamunkey Rivers Association
1-804-769-0841

Mattaponi Indian Museum
1-804-769-2229

Pamunkey Indian Museum
1-804-843-4792



Migratory Game Bird Hunters Have To Be HIP In '98!

Do you hunt doves, woodcock, rails, snipe, coots, ducks, brant or geese in Virginia? Beginning July 1, 1998, everyone (including landowners, lifetime and age-exempt hunters) must register to hunt migratory game birds in Virginia. It's free and it's easy! To register, hunters must call 1-800-WETLAND beginning July 1. You'll be asked to provide your name, address and answer a few short questions about past hunting success.

Why collect harvest information?

HIP stands for Harvest Information Program, and participation in this program means that better information will be available to wildlife professionals so they can better manage your wildlife resources. *Inadequate information about the impact of hunting on species populations has been used as a reason to challenge hunting seasons in some states.*

Current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) survey of duck hunters yields waterfowl harvest information, but the precision of these estimates can be improved. Also, this survey does not include an estimated 2.3 million hunters of doves, woodcock and other migratory game birds. Differing methods and timing of state surveys do not allow an estimate of the migratory bird harvest at regional and national levels.

How does HIP work?

After you complete your HIP telephone registration, you will be given a unique number to record on your hunting license. If you are exempt from having a license, print the number on a piece of paper and

carry it with you while hunting. This number is proof of your participation in HIP and must be available for inspection by law enforcement officials while hunting migratory game birds in Virginia.

As migratory bird hunters register through 1-800-WETLAND, USFWS will select a sample from the database. These selected hunters will receive hunter record cards prior to the migratory bird seasons or soon thereafter. They will be asked to record daily hunt information and return completed cards at the end of the migratory bird seasons. This survey will provide much more accurate harvest information than previous ones, and will make it possible for USFWS and Virginia to determine the status and needs of our migratory bird resources.

Thanks!

Your cooperation and participation are essential to responsible resource management, and are greatly appreciated by all those who enjoy our migratory game birds. If you would like additional information about HIP, please call 804-367-0904.

Below is a sample of the questions you will be asked during registration.

- Do you plan to hunt brant in Virginia this season?
- How many ducks, geese, mourning doves, and woodcock did you harvest last year?
- Did you hunt brant, rails, snipe, coots, gallinules or sea ducks last year?
- Please state your name, address and date of birth, slowly and distinctly.

Remember: This is a mandatory program for all migratory game bird hunters. Please help us help you preserve your migratory game bird seasons for the future. □



Dave Gallagher



Dave Gallagher

Top: First place winner, Robert Steiner.
Below: Judges (l to r) Karen Hollingsworth, Douglas Grann, Emily Pels, Lillian Stokes.
Not pictured, Donald Stokes.

Art Director Honored

Virginia Wildlife magazine's Art Director, Emily Pels, had the honor of being chosen as one of the five judges for the 1998-99 Federal Duck Stamp competition held in Washington, D.C. in November.

Pels and her fellow judges had the awesome task of choosing the best design for the 1998-99 Federal Duck Stamp from 382 beautiful paintings entered in the competition. First place was awarded to Robert Steiner of San Francisco, California, for this painting of a male Barrow's goldeneye. □

Recipes

By Joan Cone

Wintertime is Oyster Time

Found in estuaries around the world, true oysters have dissimilar lower and upper shells or valves which are hinged together. Oysters have been used as food since prehistoric times by people in the Chesapeake Bay area. The East Coast oyster is considered one of the tastiest in the world.

For cooking, it is more practical to purchase shucked oysters. These should be stored in the coldest part of your refrigerator. Shucked oysters keep better if packed in "oyster liquor," the natural fluids that surround the oyster in its shell.

Menu

Potato-Tomato Soup

Microwave Scalloped Oysters

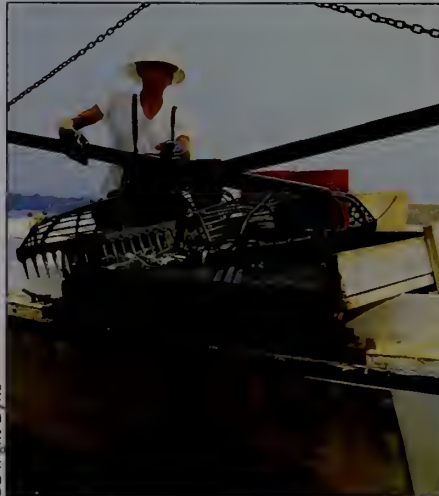
Wilted Spinach Salad With Tangerines

Quick Easy Wine Cake

Potato-Tomato Soup

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 6 roma tomatoes, peeled, seeded and pureed not too fine
- ½ teaspoon ground rosemary
- Salt to taste
- 3 medium russet potatoes, peeled, cut and diced
- 2 cups water

Place the olive oil and onion in a soup pot. Cook over low heat until the onion is tender and golden. Add the tomatoes, rosemary and salt to taste. Cook at a gentle simmer for 5 minutes. Add the potatoes and stir. Cook for 5 minutes. Add 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil and adjust to a simmer. As the potatoes become tender, break them up with the back of a wooden spoon until a coarse puree forms. Cook the soup for about 45



©Dwight Dyke

minutes or until it is thick and the flavor deepens. Serves 4 to 6.

Microwave Scalloped Oysters

- 1 pint oysters, fresh or frozen
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 1 teaspoon instant, minced onion
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, minced
- ¾ cup milk
- 2 cups Ritz cracker crumbs
- ½ cup grated Cheddar cheese

If oysters are frozen, then thaw and drain. Combine butter, minced onion, salt, lemon juice and parsley in a 1½-quart casserole dish. Cover and cook on HIGH power for 2 minutes. Place oysters in a small bowl. Cover and cook on HIGH power for 2½ minutes or just until edges begin to curl. Drain. Add oysters, milk and 1½ cups of Ritz cracker crumbs to butter mixture. Mix well. Combine ½ cup cracker crumbs with cheese and sprinkle over casserole. Heat 4 minutes, uncovered, on HIGH power or until mixture is hot. Serves 4 to 5.

Wilted Spinach Salad With Tangerines

- 2 tablespoons salt reduced soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- ⅓ cup low sodium chicken or beef broth
- 1 cup sliced onion
- 1½ cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- 5 cups fresh spinach, torn
- 2 tangerines, peeled and seeded

In a small bowl stir together soy sauce, lemon juice and oil; set aside. In a wok or large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons of the broth. Stir-fry onion and mushrooms for 3 minutes over medium-high heat. Remove from pan. Add more broth to pan; stir-fry bean sprouts. Remove. Add spinach; toss 1 minute until leaves begin to wilt. Add onion mixture, tangerines and soy sauce mixture to wok; toss 1 minute. Serve immediately. Makes 4 to 5 servings.

Quick and Easy Wine Cake

- 1 package (18.25 ounces) yellow cake mix
- 1 package (3.4 ounces) vanilla instant pudding mix
- 4 eggs or 1 cup egg substitute
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup sherry
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg

Combine all ingredients. Mix with electric beater about 5 minutes at medium speed. Pour batter into a greased angle food cake pan. Bake in a preheated 350° oven for about 45 minutes or until cake tests done. Cool in pan about 5 minutes before turning out on rack. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes 16 to 20 servings. □

February Afield

The calendar says February is the last full month of winter, but a great many species of wildlife as well as many sportsmen consider this month to be the first month of spring.

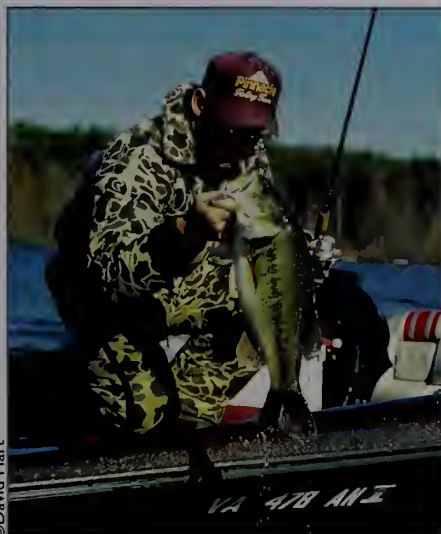
This is the month when yellow perch and walleyes kick off their spawning runs. The more famous runs of perch occur on the Mattaponi, Pamunkey, Chickahominy and the Potomac rivers. For walleyes the Staunton River from Brookneal upstream to the Leesville Dam enjoys a growing reputation for hosting a surge of spawning walleyes in February. Lesser known, but growing in popularity, is a run of walleyes from Lake Chesdin up the Appomattox River with catches reported as far upstream as Farmville.

February enjoys a reputation as a fine month for crappie fishing, particularly in the latter part of the month when the slabs are found basking in the sun-warmed shallows. Look to such waters as Buggs Island Lake, Lake Gaston, Lake Chesdin, Chickahominy Lake and Lake Anna to offer excellent crappie fishing.

The warming sun of late February also wakes up those fattening bass in the smaller ponds. The ponds, being smaller and shallower than the larger reservoirs, often warm up sooner, giving the bass an early wake-up call. Check out some of the many Game Department-owned ponds for some excellent February bass fishing. For bass, at this time of the year, the key is to fish lures slowly and to experiment until you discover the best pattern.

February is also an excellent month for fishing for landlocked striped bass. Smith Mountain Lake, Lake Gaston, Buggs Island Lake, Lake Anna as well as Lakes Western Branch and Prince offer fine striper fishing if the weather is not too cold for anglers.

If any one fishing method is popular in February, there will be lots of



©David Hart

votes for vertical jigging. Nowadays, vertical jigging is almost as popular in freshwater as it is on the briny deep. However, as more and more anglers get involved they quickly discover that there is more to vertical jigging than meets the eye.

The trick to vertical jigging is to remain in contact with the bait at all times, even when it is dropping. Graphite rods and light co-polymer lines enhance the "feel" of the lure. Anglers must also develop a technique determining what type of jigging action is most effective for each species of fish or under certain conditions.

It seems that each angler has his own favorite jigging technique. Some barely twitch the lure while others have jigging motions ranging from a few inches to a foot or more. I know one fellow who successfully uses a 1/8-ounce Hopkins Shorty. He simply lowers it, using a spinning outfit, along a piling or other cover. He lowers the lure to about a foot off the bottom and attempts to hold it there motionless. Of course, there is movement from the boat and the rod tip and this appears to be just enough. If he doesn't get a hit he raises the lure a foot and holds it at that level for a minute and so on. He

tells me that this method is death on crappie. Once he caught a 7 pound bass while fishing this way.

Vertical jigging has proved to be effective on white and yellow perch, smallmouth and largemouth bass, striped bass, crappie, bream and even carp.

Ron Southwick, an assistant chief of the Game Department's Fish Division, is almost a jigging purist. For quite sometime, when stationed in the Suffolk area, he caught lots of carp from Lake Prince using Rapala ice fishing jigs.

Jigging for white perch has become a favorite sport of many anglers on Buggs Island Lake and at Lake Gaston. They locate the fish using their fish locators and then jig for them with Hopkins lures ranging from 1/8 to 1/4 ounce.

In Northern Virginia, particularly at the mouth of Occoquan Creek, anglers do well jigging for yellow perch and crappie with Silver Buddies and Berkley Power Grubs in the chartreuse color.

Last February, on Philpott Lake bass anglers were doing quite well jigging for smallmouths using Hopkins spoons. In fact, on Philpott, bass jigging has been developed as a finely tuned art.

For the hunter there are two full weeks of grouse hunting until the season closes February 14. The resident Canada goose season west of I-95 is open through February 7 and, once again, the snow goose season stays open into March. February is a popular month among crow hunters who may hunt four days each week all month long.

Finally, as to assure that spring is just around the corner, robins arrive in Virginia to join those that have wintered here. It is also a time for motorists to be especially watchful at night because many furbearers, including skunks, opossums, raccoons and others, are abroad in search of mates. □

Photo TipS

Keep It Running Smoothly

I didn't like the sound of it. My beloved 100mm macro lens crackled and groaned loudly as I extended it for one-to-one focus on a bug. As the bug flit away, I noticed deep, parallel gouges in the lense's metal barrel. Good grief! When was the last time I used it? Uh, oh. Sand dunes...beaches....

Just as you perform regular maintenance on your car or home, this same care and concern is necessary for keeping cameras and lenses in tip top shape and working for years to come. The following tips should help you keep your equipment running smoothly.

1) The primary rule in caring for camera equipment is simple: keep it clean!

2) Store your equipment in a camera bag or case. This will help protect the equipment from dust, moisture and getting knocked around unnecessarily. When using your equipment, try to keep it covered especially around sand, salt water and rain. A plastic bag with a hole cut out for the lens goes a long way in your fight against the elements. (In real sandy or snowy areas I usually place my equipment in Ziplock plastic bags inside my camera bag or case.)

3) If a camera gets rained on, dry it as soon as possible using a soft, dry cloth or a hair dryer on low. If equipment becomes wet due to salt water, before drying, wipe it off with a soft cloth dampened with fresh water. A camera submerged in water for more than a few seconds might be a lost cause. In the days of mechanical cameras it was normal practice to place a soaked camera in a bucket of fresh water and rush it to the local camera repairman. Today's high tech electronic cameras are another story. If your electronic camera drowns you might want to prepare yourself for a new camera purchase.

4) Keep an inexpensive blower brush and lense paper in your camera bag. These items will aid in quick cleanups. Cans of compressed air offer more power for dust or water removal but you have to be very careful when using them. Shaking or turning a can upside down before spraying can accidentally send a burst of freon into the delicate parts of your camera or lens. This is a mess to clean up and can ruin some components of your camera.

5) Never touch the front element of your lenses. Natural oil from fingers can attack delicate lens coatings which can sometimes leave permanent marks. When cleaning the front element of your lens use a lint-free, linen handkerchief or lens tissue and apply a drop of lens cleaner or distilled water to the cloth or tissue before cleaning. Never drop cleaning liquid directly on the lens as it may roll to the sides and get into the workings of the lens.

6) Always keep the front element of your lens covered with either an ultraviolet haze or skylight filter. These inexpensive filters (compared to the cost of a new lens, that is) will protect your investment from dust, water, fingers, and sticks.

7) If you don't plan on using your camera for a while, remove the batteries. If left unattended, batteries can leak into the battery compartment and ruin battery contacts. (If this happens it is sometimes cheaper to buy a new camera than to have such damage repaired.)

8) Protect your equipment from extreme temperatures. Never leave your camera and lenses in the car where it could heat up during the summer or freeze during the winter. High and low temperatures play havoc on the internal lubrications a camera needs to make the system run smoothly.

9) Your camera should be

checked and cleaned periodically by a professional camera repairman. (A good camera shop should know where to find one.) An overhaul should include checking the accuracy of shutter speeds, flash synchronization, lens focus, aperture function and a thorough internal and external cleaning. Get an estimate first. Expect to pay from \$75 to \$125 for this service.

If you take care of your camera, it will give you many years of service and enjoyment. □


Wildlife Art News You Can Use

I'm in a gallery! The Raven Gallery at 106-A East Main Street (on the Downtown Mall) in Charlottesville, VA features talented, wildlife artists from around the state including world renowned sculptors William and David Turner and talented painter Ruth Ray. Ruth, who owns the gallery with her husband Victor, is so good that she has been included in the 1997 book, *The Best of Wildlife Art*. I am proud to be a part of the Raven Gallery. Please stop in and take a look around. For more information call the gallery at 1-800-99RTIST.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the upcoming Fairfax County Wildlife Art and Photography Show on March 7 & 8 at the Robert E. Lee Recenter on 6601 Telegraph Rd in Franconia, VA. Doors open from 10:00 to 5:00, Saturday and Sunday. Admission is around \$5. For more info call 703-941-1065. On March 21 & 22, travel to the Rappahannock River Waterfowl Show at the White Stone Firehouse in White Stone, VA. Hours are 10:00 to 6:00 on Saturday and 10:00 to 5:00 on Sunday. Admission is around \$5. For more info call 804-435-6355. I've been to both shows and they are awesome. I hope to see you there! □

Attention Migratory Game Bird Hunters

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